

we can scarcely imagine anything better calculated than this Atlas to impress the general public with a true idea of the value and interest of scientific pursuits. The work must indeed be regarded as one of the most valuable gifts ever offered by science to education.

*A History of Inventions, Discoveries and Origins.* By Prof. BECKMANN. 4th ed. Edited by W. FRANCIS, Ph.D. &c., and J. W. GRIFFITH, M.D. &c.

From the title of this work it would at first appear that it had little to do with the subjects to which our pages are devoted, but under the third head, that of Origins, we find several articles which, although hardly to be considered as scientific, have considerable interest for the naturalist. The inquiries concerning the plants known to the ancients and the endeavours to settle their synonymy with modern species present a good example of the wonderful perseverance and earnestness which characterize German research even when its results are to be devoted to popular instruction.

In the article on the history of kitchen vegetables, the author, in addition to those commonly in use, refers shortly to several which are no longer considered worthy of cultivation. Speaking of the name of *Borago officinalis*, he says:—"Some of the old botanists have conjectured that it is derived from the word *corago*, which Apuleius, whose period is uncertain, gives as a synonym of *buglossum*. Some think that the reading in Apuleius ought to be *borago*; and others assert that *corago* is the true name, and arose from the quality which the plant has of strengthening the heart; consequently we ought properly to read *corago*, and not *borago*. It is probable that our forefathers, under the idea that their borage was the *buglossum* of the ancients and therefore had the property of strengthening the heart, threw the flowers into wine, that their spirits might by these means be more enlivened\*.

"Our borage is certainly a foreign plant, and Cæsalpinus said that it was brought from other countries to Italy. Linnæus positively states that it first came from Aleppo; but I have not yet been able to find on what authority this assertion is founded."

There is a very interesting article on Kermes and Cochineal, containing a well-digested account of the œconomic history of these curious insects. It is stated that 1,569,120 lbs. of cochineal were exported from and consumed in this country in 1844, and that each pound contains 70,000 insects!

We do not quite agree with the editors in their opinion of plant-skeletons. This means of investigating structure, of stems especially, has been too much neglected, and is in fact almost the only means of acquiring a clear idea of relations of parts in some plants; such a means is the less to be dispensed with that we know so little of the subject. This book has been well-known in its former editions and its value fully appreciated, and great credit is due to the present

\* Hence the old distich, "I, borage,  
Give courage."

editors for the judicious emendations of and additions to the text. It affords no little gratification to the lovers of progress to see such works, prepared under careful superintendence, issued at a price within the reach of those who have hitherto had to content themselves with the second-hand compilations of the earlier "cheap literature."

## PROCEEDINGS OF LEARNED SOCIETIES.

### ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

Sept. 22, 1846.—William Yarrell, Esq., Vice-President, in the Chair.

John Gould, Esq., laid before the meeting the following letter, detailing the circumstances of the death of Mr. John Gilbert, who formerly had been many years in the employment of the Society. He fell in the service of zoological science during an expedition into the interior of Australia.

"Sydney, May 12, 1846.

"Dear Sir,—As I was one of the party that journeyed from Sydney to Port Essington, and not knowing whether you had been made acquainted with the full particulars of poor Gilbert's death by Dr. Leichhardt, or any other of the party, thinking the details of his melancholy fate would be read with interest, I shall offer no apology for addressing this to you.

"As Mr. Gilbert's log, which has been sent home to you, fully narrates all particulars up to the eventful 28th of June, I shall offer no remarks of my own. At the most northerly point we reached on the east side of the Gulf of Carpentaria, in lat.  $15^{\circ} 57'$ , and about fifty miles from the coast, we encamped for the night at a small shallow lagoon surrounded by low tea-trees, the country around beautifully open. Having partaken of our usual meal of dried meat about 3 P.M., Gilbert, taking his gun, sallied forth in search of something new—he procured a *Climacteris* and a Finch, which he skinned before dinner; our scanty meal was soon despatched; poor Gilbert was busily employed plaiting the cabbage-tree, intending to make a new hat, which, alas! he never lived to finish. The shades of evening closed around, and after chatting for a short time we retired to our separate tents—Gilbert and Murphy to theirs, Mr. Calvert and myself to ours, and Phillips to his; the Doctor and our two black fellows slept round the fire, entirely unconscious of the evil designs of the natives; having always found those we had passed so friendly and well-disposed, we felt in as great security as you do in the midst of London, lying on our blankets, conversing on different topics. Not one, I think, could have closed his eyelids, when I was surprised by a noise, as if some persons were throwing sticks at our tent; thinking it must be some trick played on us by our companions, I sat up to look out; another volley of spears was thrown; a terrific yell, that will ring in my ears for ever, was raised, and pierced with spears, which I found it impossible to extricate, I sunk helpless on the ground; the whole body rushed upon us with their waddies,